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SCHAKOWSKY PROPOSES PLAN TO PREVENT FUTURE GASOLINE AND HEATING OIL SHORTAGES AND PRICE RUN-UPS

ALSO JOINS MEMBERS TO CALL ON PRESIDENT TO RELEASE OIL FROM STRATEGIC PETROLEUM RESERVE

WASHINGTON, D.C. - U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) today announced her intentions to introduce legislation to prevent future gasoline and heating oil shortages and price run-ups. For weeks, oil companies have been gouging consumers and punishing Chicago and Milwaukee for using ethanol, which has forced Chicagoans to pay an extra 40 to 50 cents more per gallon at the pump.

Schakowsky will introduce a bill to require the Department of Energy (DOE) to monitor crude oil, distillate and gasoline inventories and refinery utilization levels on national and regional levels. DOE would have to notify Congress whenever inventories have fallen to levels that mean supplies may be inadequate to meet needs, creating disruptions and driving up prices. DOE would also have to recommend to Congress what steps could be taken to alleviate inventory problems. Those steps could include release of Strategic Petroleum Reserve oil, requiring increased refinery output, purchase of gasoline or heating oil products from abroad, switching refiners from producing gasoline to heating oil or vice versa.

"My bill will sound the alarm well before any crisis occurs. We used to have a requirement on the books that gasoline and heating oil and crude oil inventories had to be monitored. When those inventories fell to dangerous levels, action could be taken to prevent price and supply disruptions like we're seeing today," Schakowsky said.

"This early warning system needs to be put back in place. We need to know when a crisis may be looming so that we can respond before consumers, businesses and farmers have to pay the price," Schakowsky added.

Schakowsky made her announcement during a news conference with other members to urge the President to tap into the Strategic Petroleum Reserve.

"We need to act now to bring gasoline prices down and the President should release oil from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve in order to bring more supplies to market and get us some much needed price relief. We need to deal with today's crisis. We also need to prevent future crises. We must guarantee that last winter's heating oil shortage and this summer's out-of-control gasoline prices are not recurring nightmares to communities around the country," Schakowsky said.